

Amendments to the Specification:

On page 4, after line 35, please insert the following:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1. Figure 1 shows the nucleotide and amino acid sequence of the gene *HtrA_{LI}* (SEQ ID NO: 1). The amino acids of the catalytic domain and transmembrane domain are box framed. The positions of primers F, G, and A are indicated by arrows.

Figures 2 A and B. Figures 2 A and B show the growth curves of the *htrA⁺/htrA* strain, *htrA* strain, and the wild-type IL1403 strain. The growth was monitored by measuring the OD₆₀₀ at the indicated time intervals. Figure 2A shows the growth of *htrA⁺/htrA*, *htrA*, and IL1403 strains at 30°C. Figure 2B shows the growth of *htrA⁺/htrA*, *htrA*, and IL1403 strains at 37°C.

Figure 3. Figure 3 shows the effect of *HtrA_{LI}* mutation on the stability of Nuc protein. The degradation profiles of Nuc protein in IL1403 (first three wells), *htrA* (three central wells) and *htrA⁺/htrA* (last three wells) strains are shown. The immunological detection of the Nuc protein was carried out on the protein samples extracted from the total culture (T), cells alone (C) and from the medium (M) of each strain.

Figure 4. Figure 4 shows the effect of *HtrA_{LI}* mutation on the stability of Usp-Δ_{sp}Nuc protein. The degradation profiles of Usp-Δ_{sp}Nuc protein in IL1403 (first three wells), *htrA* (three central wells) and *htrA⁺/htrA* (last three wells) strains are shown. The immunological detection for the Usp-Δ_{sp}Nuc protein was carried out on the protein samples extracted from the total culture (T), cells alone (C) and from the medium (M) of each strain.

Figure 5. Figure 5 shows the effect of *HtrA_{LI}* mutation on the stability of N1p4-Δ_{sp}Nuc protein. The degradation profiles of N1p4-Δ_{sp}Nuc protein in IL1403 (first well), *htrA* (central well) and *htrA⁺/htrA* (last well) strains are shown.

Figure 6. Figure 6 shows the effect of *HtrA_{LI}* mutation on the stability of Exp5- Δ_{sp} Nuc protein. The degradation profiles of Exp5- Δ_{sp} Nuc protein in IL1403 (first well), *htrA* (central well) and *htrA⁺/htrA* (last well) strains are shown.

Figure 7. Figure 7 shows a zymogram of the bacteriolysin activity of AcmA protein. The degradation profiles of AcmA protein in IL1403 (first three wells), *htrA* (three central wells) and *htrA⁺/htrA* (last three wells) strains are shown. The detection of the AcmA protein was carried out on the protein samples extracted from the total culture (T), cells alone (C) and from the medium (M) of each strain.